Unit .13

Session .01

The Pictures of God's Authority

Scripture

1 Kings 17:1-4,10-24

1 Now Elijah the Tishbite, from the Gilead settlers, said to Ahab, "As the LORD God of Israel lives, in whose presence I stand, there will be no dew or rain during these years except by my command!" **2** Then the word of the LORD came to him: **3** "Leave here, turn eastward, and hide at the Wadi Cherith where it enters the Jordan. **4** You are to drink from the wadi. I have commanded the ravens to provide for you there." ... **10** So Elijah got up and went to Zarephath. When he arrived at the city gate, there was a widow gathering wood. Elijah called to her and said, "Please bring me a little water in a cup and let me drink." **11** As she went to get it, he called to her and said, "Please bring me a piece of bread in your hand." **12** But she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I don't have anything baked—only a handful of flour in the jar and a bit of oil in the jug. Just now, I am gathering a couple of sticks in order to go prepare it for myself and my son so we can eat it and die." **13** Then Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid; go and do as you have said. But first make me a small loaf from it and bring it out to me. Afterward, you may make some for yourself and your son, **14** for this is what the LORD God of Israel says, 'The flour jar will not become empty and the oil jug will not run dry until the day the Lord sends rain on the surface of the land.'" **15** So she proceeded to do according to the word of Elijah. Then the woman, Elijah, and her household ate for many days. **16** The flour jar did not become empty, and the oil jug did not run dry, according to the word of the LORD he had spoken through Elijah. **17** After this, the son of the woman who owned the house became ill. His illness got worse until he stopped breathing. **18** She said to Elijah, "Man of God, why are you here? Have you come to call attention to my iniquity so that my son is put to death?"**19** But Elijah said to her, "Give me your son." So he took him from her arms, brought him up to the upstairs room where he was staying, and laid him on his own bed. **20** Then he cried out to the LORD and said, "LORD my God, have you also brought tragedy on the widow I am staying with by killing her son?" **21** Then he stretched himself out over the boy three times. He cried out to the LORD and said, "LORD my God, please let this boy's life come into him again!" **22** So the LORD listened to Elijah, and the boy's life came into him again, and he lived. **23** Then Elijah took the boy, brought him down from the upstairs room into the house, and gave him to his mother. Elijah said, "Look, your son is alive." **24** Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know you are a man of God and the LORD's word from your mouth is true."

Intro Options

Main Point:
God's grace often comes in unexpected ways.

Remember, this icon means there is a Leader Pack item that goes with the lesson. See Leader Pack for additional instructions.

Option 1

You'll need five pens, pencils, or small sticks. Sit so that the sticks are in front of you while your students are around you; they should be able to see you and the sticks clearly. Tell them you're going to think of a number between one and five; it's their job to guess the number.

Arrange the sticks in front of you however you wish. You can make a square, a W, two rows and three columns, whatever you want. The sticks are actually a distraction that have nothing to do with what number you're thinking of (but don't tell that to the students!). After you've finished placing the sticks, discreetly hold a certain number of fingers extended on one hand (maybe put your hand against your leg, or on your side). However many fingers you have extended is the number you're thinking of. Let them guess the number, then tell them the accurate number. Repeat the process.

As time goes by, make your fingers more obvious. Once students figure it out, tell them not to tell. Make your fingers increasingly more obvious until everyone has figured it out. Debrief by telling the students the sticks were a distraction; you never actually said the sticks had anything to do with the number. They probably assumed there was a connection. In the same way, we often make assumptions about what miracles should look like. However, we'll see that sometimes God's miracles look differently than what we'd expect: for example, instead of supplying gobs of food, He consistently gives just enough food for each day.

Option 2

Open up by playing "Would You Rather" You'll offer the students two scenarios and see which they would prefer and why. The game can be as broad as your imagination (or theirs, if you let them come up with ideas). Here are some examples:

Would you rather...Drink mustard or eat black pepper? Be able to turn invisible or to fly? Have permanent polka dot tattoos or have neon pink skin?

Eventually, ask them the following "Would you rather" questions: A) Receive a huge amount of your favorite food at once, or receive a small daily allotment of it for the next five years? B) Live with friends in poor village with no running water or electricity or live with your enemies in a place with power and water? C) Live a placid life with no magnificent events or live a life with big joys but heavy sorrows, yet with the promise it will all work out in the end?

Explain that these last three "Would you rather" questions relate to the life of Elijah, whom you'll study: A) God supplied Elijah just enough daily food; B) Elijah lived in a foreign land in poor conditions but with a faithful widow; C) Elijah's life had loads of both difficulties and miracles

TEACHING PLAN

Elijah's context was one of national apostasy. During the reign of Ahab, who was married to Jezebel, the nation practiced idolatry. (1 Kings 16:29-33.) Worship of Baal, the false god of rain and fertility, was state-sponsored. God raised up Elijah, who came from an obscure place, Tishbe, to minister in this dark time.

Read 1 Kings 17:1-4.

Elijah's name means "My God is Yahweh," an appropriate title for this spiritual leader. Elijah boldly confronted the king, proclaiming a drought (v. 1). The drought was actually a promise fulfilled. According to God's law, drought was the punishment for pagan idolatry. (Deut. 11:16-17; 28:23-24.) This is because God's people were to trust God alone for rain. If they turned to another god, then Yahweh would withhold rain. This specific judgment was very fitting since Baal was supposed to give rain. Notice also that not only will it not rain, but neither will there be dew. No one could claim "bad luck" or a "bad break." No rain and no dew demonstrated God's judgment.

- **What are some ways we try to find fulfillment apart from God?**

Like Moses, Elijah fled to the east after an initial confrontation with Ahab, since he needed protection from the wicked king. He went to an inhospitable area east of the Jordan (vv. 3-5). There, Elijah drank from a brook and was fed by a raven (vv. 6-7), showing that God is sovereign over not only the rain but over all of creation as well. (Ps. 104). Further, notice that the bread and meat were provided every morning and evening. (Ex. 16:8,12-13). His needs were provided for on a daily basis.

All of this should encourage us. You can trust in God to provide for your daily needs. He might not supply you with the finest of meats every day, and He might not provide in such a miraculous way as He did with Elijah, but God nonetheless provides. No doubt the false prophets of Jezebel ate better than Elijah did, but God still provided for him. This, too, is a good lesson. Even the prophet suffered from this famine, showing he was not immune to suffering. However, he has the presence of God and the provision of God, and that is more than enough.

- **How have you seen God provide for your daily necessities, especially in a difficult season of life?**

When the brook dried up (v. 7), God's provision for Elijah became more dramatic. Elijah went to a Phoenician town of Zarephath, which was Baal's territory (i.e., Jezebel's stomping grounds). Here, God promised to use an unnamed widow to provide for Elijah (vv. 8-9). Not only could Baal not stop the drought, but Yahweh's provision extended right into Baal's home turf.

Read 1 Kings 17:10-16.

When Elijah approached this particular widow, he first asked her for some water (v. 10b). After her favorable response, he also asked her for a bit of bread (v. 11). Even though she wasn't an Israelite, she answered in the name of Elijah's God: "As the LORD your God lives." Then she told him that all she had was a handful of flour and a little jug of oil, which she had planned on using for the last meal before she and her son died (v. 12). Not exactly the best time to show up for dinner!

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
God's grace often comes in unexpected ways.

1 Kings 17

1. Like most of the other prophets mentioned in this book, Elijah simply appeared without any introduction. He must, however, have already been well known in Israel at the time he appeared to announce the judgment of God for the sins of Ahab and Israel (v. 1). The judgment was that there would be no rain or dew for some years as a punishment for the sins mentioned in the previous verses. Elijah must not be thought of as similar to African rainmakers. Stopping or making rain was not his main work. Rather, as a true prophet, Elijah could see or hear what the Lord was planning to do. James says that the rains stopped because the prophet prayed in faith. (Jas. 5:17-18.) The closing words of Elijah's prophecy left some hope that if the king and the people repented, the situation might change. But they did not, and Elijah had to leave and settle east of the Jordan River (1 Kings 17:2-3). By doing this he escaped death with the other prophets (1 Kings 18:4; 19:10) and had a supply of water from the Brook Kerith, which continued to flow for some time despite drought. The Lord took charge of meeting his need for food (1 Kings 18:4-6).[1]

9. Zarephath was located in Phoenicia, the heart and home of Baal worship and Jezebel's home. The story of Elijah and the widow demonstrates the Lord's sovereignty over Phoenicia as well as His grace and mercy even to Phoenician idolaters.

10-12. We now see that the drought has gripped even the home country of Baal, the rain-giver. Elijah met a widow and asked for just a little water and bread, but all she had was a handful of flour and a little oil (vv. 10-12). The quantities were so minimal that a few sticks sufficed to cook her food. This was the plight of a woman who was otherwise well-off enough to have a house with an extra guest room on the first floor. The verbs are ironically paired—eat and die. This was more like a funeral meal than one for sustenance. Elijah's prophetic authority now began to emerge, and the story portrayed it in two ways. First, with the command-compliance motif, Elijah directed the widow (v. 3) and she obeyed, even against the parental instinct to first attend to her son. As the Lord was to Elijah in the first episode, so Elijah was to the widow in the second episode. Second, while Elijah was the passive recipient of divine provision before, he was now an active collaborator with God. He spoke the oracle of God to make the miraculous provision possible (v. 14). As in the first episode, obedience was rewarded and the promise fulfilled (vv. 15-16).[2]

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 8, DDG)

Miracles

A miracle is an event in which God makes an exception to the natural order of things, or supersedes natural laws, for the purpose of demonstrating His glory and/or validating His message. Miracles are recorded throughout Scripture; miraculous signs and wonders were oftentimes evident when a prophet or an apostle was speaking God's message to the people. Because we believe God to be all-powerful and personally involved in this world, we believe He can and does perform miracles.

TEACHING PLAN

- **Share of a time when God used an unexpected person to provide for your needs? Was it convenient for them to help you during this time?**

Elijah tested the widow's faith and asked her to provide for him first, then for herself and her son (v. 13). He assured her that there would be enough for her and her son, and that her flour and oil would be sufficient to get through the drought (v. 14). The widow trusted in Elijah's promise, acted accordingly, and God provided. Every day the widow went over to her little barrel of flour and small jar of oil, and every day, there was enough to bake bread for one more day!

The most unexpected people often find saving grace in the most unexpected places. God graciously provides daily bread to satisfy our physical hunger, and He has provided the bread of life in Jesus, who satisfies our spiritual hunger. Let us, as His beggars, tell other beggars where to find bread.

- **Have you ever seen God's provision come in unexpected, even miraculous ways? Explain.**

Read 1 Kings 17:17-24.

Up to this point, God's miraculous provision had kept everyone alive. But then we read of the widow's son becoming ill and dying (v. 17). The widow blamed Elijah for this tragedy (v. 18). But then Elijah took the boy in his arms (v. 19) and cried out to God in a prayer of lament (v. 20). Next, Elijah stretched himself upon the child three times, crying out to God to raise the child from the dead (v. 21). The Lord heard Elijah's prayer and brought the child back to life (v. 22). After the boy was raised, Elijah took the child and delivered him to his mother (v. 23). The widow affirmed her trust in Elijah's word and confessed her faith in the living God (v. 24).

- **When you face a trial, what is your first instinct?**

Express Frustration ○ ○ ○ **Panic/Worry** ○ ○ ○ **Make a Plan** ○ ○ ○ **Pray** ○

Stories of death surround us. At any moment, a loved one could take his or her last breath. Like in this story, just when things seemed to be working out wonderfully, death took someone. In this case, it's a precious child. But there is hope beyond the grave for every grieving believer: God raises the dead. God gives us a sign of His resurrection power in this Old Testament story.

In Luke 7:11-17, we read of a fascinating story of Jesus, which contains strong echoes of this scene in 1 Kings. However, there is one great difference: Elijah cried out for God's help in prayer. Jesus simply told him to get up (Luke 7:14). Elijah was great, but Jesus is greater.

God's power to raise the dead was demonstrated once for all in the resurrection of Jesus (Rom. 1:4). He has swallowed up death in victory (1 Cor. 15:54-57). Now, God gives life to spiritually dead people (Eph. 2:1-10), and we await the glorious, final resurrection when the dead in Christ will rise one day in the future (1 Thess. 4:16-18).

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
God's grace often comes in unexpected ways.

1 Kings 17

14-16. We should marvel not only at God's provision but also at God's compassion and grace. We see His compassion in the fact that God cared for this poor widow. Throughout Scripture, we find God's concern for the vulnerable. (Ps. 68:5.)

We also marvel at God's grace, as we see how His grace reached an outsider. God is not a tribal deity but the Lord over the nations. In response to Jesus' hometown rejecting Him (Luke 4:22, 28-30), Jesus used this story of the widow of Zarephath, an outsider, as a warning to the locals who were listening. He was the promised one who had come to save the world in fulfillment of Genesis 12:3.

21. Elijah stretched himself on the child, thereby seemingly transferred life from himself to the sick one. Regardless of the method used, the important fact is that God raised the boy from the dead. The child revived because Yahweh heard Elijah's plea, not because of the prophet's prowess. Yahweh is God, not Baal, not Elijah.

Still, the miracle helped the woman know that Elijah was a man who represented and was sent by the Lord. She understood that the same God who provided the oil provided life for her son. Baal may be dead, but Yahweh is not, nor is her son…. Death cannot thwart Yahweh's purposes.[3]

Activity

You're going to play improv. Ask for volunteers to be the improv crew; the rest of your students can be the audience and supply ideas and settings for the improv crew.

Split the improv actors into two groups. Tell them one group is to be Christians; the second group is non-Christians. The two groups should be on opposite ends of the "stage;" the rest of the students will call out situations, and the improv actors should act like they're in those situations.

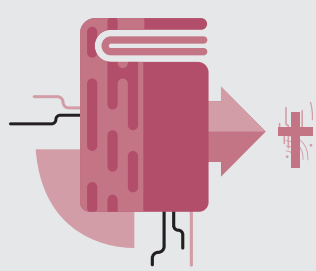
Have the audience call out ideas for the actors: a date, a baseball game, Saturday evening, etc.

After a bit, it's your turn to call out situations. Call out different times of trouble: they got a bad grade at school; they have a tough game coming up against an opponent; their friends are spreading rumors about them. See how the non-Christians and Christians act differently.

Debrief by talking about whether or not the Christians moved to prayer. The miracles we've seen remind us of God's mighty power; how quickly we move to prayer (or don't) in times of trouble reflects how much we trust (or don't) in the God who works miracles

(p. 10, DDG) Christ Connection

The miracles Elijah performed revealed that he was a prophet of the one true God and that the Lord's words were true. In a greater way, the miracles Jesus performed revealed that He is the Son of God, the true Word of God (John 20:30-31).



THE PICTURES OF GOD'S AUTHORITY

1 Kings 17:1–4, 10–24

LESSON TITLE

God's grace often comes in unexpected ways.

JESUS CONNECTION

The miracles Elijah performed revealed that he was a prophet of the one true God and that the Lord's words were true. In a greater way, the miracles Jesus performed revealed that He is the Son of God, the true Word of God (John 20:30-31).

LIFEWISE QUALITY

TRUSTWORTHINESS – Being able to be relied upon.

HEAD

What was the first miracle the widow experienced that grew her trust in God and Elijah?

Summarize what the widow said to Elijah after she witnessed the miracle with her son.

HEART

What has God done to show He is trustworthy? Why does knowing who God is and what He has done help us to trust Him?

Did Elijah know why God allowed the little boy to get sick and die? Why do you think he was able to trust God even when he didn't understand God's plan?

HANDS

We tend to rely on things or people rather than God when we need something or when things go wrong. Make a short list of some of the things or people we turn to. For each person or thing on your list, write one reason why they are less trustworthy than God. Ask God to help you remember to rely on Him more than anything or anyone else.